



Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

The Planning Commission met for a Regular Committee Meeting, June 15, 2023,
at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

1. Call to Order/Attendance:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Manns at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Manns, Vice-Chair Broeker, Commission members: Anderson, Bagierek, Gardner, Gaunt, LaChey.

Absent: None.

Others Present: Director of Planning, Zoning, and Project Management Ryan Cummins, Deputy Clerk Sara Williams.

2. Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Gaunt, second by Gardner to approve the agenda as presented for June 15, 2023.

Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Anderson, second by Bagierek to approve the minutes as presented for regular meeting May 18, 2023. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items: None.

5. Old Business:

A. Short-Term Rental Task Force – Verbal Update

Short-Term Rental Taskforce Chairwoman Anderson gave an update on the STR Rental Task Force. She said that they had a good meeting this afternoon. They wrote a letter updating the community about where the task force is in the process and invited them to engage and explained how they can do that. The Task Force is still in the assessment process and kind of moving into the engagement process. In the meeting today, they looked at recommendations from McKenna on community engagement. They recommended and there was consensus among the Task Force to get them to take it to a more formal proposal, but to do a town hall that will let people have more dialogue with the Task Force members and also have some boards where they can kind of agree or disagree but a more engaging forum. The Task Force will also be

moving their second meeting of the month to 5 to 7 pm so that people who work traditional working hours can get to at least most of those meetings and that provides more opportunity, and then do a survey. The next step will be for McKenna to come back to us with more meat on the bones on what that will look like including survey questions and what the townhall boards would say. They also had some proposals for providing some additional data and they had some discussion around what they really need. They offered some things that the Task Force didn't feel like it was critical for them to do the work plus it was costly. The Task Force did ask them to focus more on some communities that are similar to Saugatuck that have already put changes in place, whether caps or other significant changes a few years ago where they can see where they were and what they did and then in a few years they can see what they experienced, both intended and unintended. She thinks that they all felt that that would be valuable to our discernment process, and then they can also get some more data on short term rental rates or levels in other communities. This way they can see how they fit into the bigger picture. McKenna will bring us back some recommendations and they are going to follow-up with Ryan to make sure they are on a good path with that. If you are interested in seeing it, it is in the STRTF meeting packet for today's meeting. All of the Task Force members provided what they think the positives, negatives, and opportunities are for short-term rentals and McKenna aggregated that into one document. This will be a living document so you can take a look at that if you are interested.

Zoning Administrator Cummins had a few updates to add. He said that the Task Force asked for similar data that the Planning Commission had requested. They want to take a look at how the number of short-term rentals break down by zoning districts and how many are in our commercial districts. There is interest in looking at short-term rentals by their occupancy numbers as far as max occupancy. Zoning Administrator Cummins aggregated the data from what we have in our system and McKenna is sort of working on mapping that out and compiling that. There has also been some interest in looking at how many properties in the City are short-term rentals or principal residence exemptions. Our assessor was there today to answer a question related to how PRE's work in relation to short-term rentals. At the last meeting, the Task Force went over enforcement analysis, as far as noise has been a very common concern that a lot of folks have raised in their public comments. The STR Taskforce numbers identified that as well, so the sheriff's office was there to present on how they have handled those complaints and they took a look at how many formal noise complaints with an actual complainant the city has had over the last few years and were able to take a look at how many of those were actually short-term rental units. Cummins touched on the City's efforts over the last few years as per City Council and 2021, establishing an actual investigation, fee, and policy as far as what that process should look like. He explained to the Task Force that the former Project Coordinator, Kate White, did a lot of proactive enforcement and actually went through a lot of online listings, took a look at which ones were registered and which weren't, and did a lot of proactive work to try to bring a lot of them into compliance. He said that since he has been with the City of Saugatuck, he has been working to try to clear up a lot of our rules that are in place, and getting ahead of folks that are going to be expiring to reapply so that they can avoid certificates lapsing if they want to

continue on. McKenna has done some community comparisons for various communities and is taking a look at what short-term rental regulations they have on the books.

6. New Business:

A. Waterfront Development Zoning Ordinance Review – Public Engagement Discussion

Zoning Administrator Cummins said that the Taskforce and Planning Commission had homework assigned from the last meeting and everyone completed their assignments. At the last meeting Planning Consultant David Jirousek presented to you a draft list of survey questions. After he received everyone's feedback along with some other thoughts on community engagement, he put that together in the form that is before the committee this evening. He is looking to kind of finalize a Community Engagement Plan with the Planning Commission tonight that we can work off of and then you can connect provide you an update with his assessment.

Planning Consultant Jirousek said that he was very interested to hear about the progress with the Short-Term Rental Taskforce and the public input strategies. He thinks that they could have a very similar conversation about the public input required for the waterfront project as well. He discussed with Zoning Administrator Cummins about whether or not these efforts could play off each other in terms of public involvement. They felt at that time that it might cause more confusion to have dueling topics at the same meeting and they aren't sure if there will be an opportunity for that. Maybe in terms of getting the word out via newsletters or other ways like tagging on opportunities for other events just in terms of public notice. As of right now, you do have the community survey in front of you and he said that he did incorporate probably 90% of the input to somebody if it were related to each other. There are some similar comments from different Planning Commission members so some of the changes might not look exactly as you suggested, but he hopes that your intent has been met with all of the questions. He said that they have to clarify the residency questions, clarify the location in terms of the different areas of the city, how they use the waterfronts, and the features of the waterfront area that are most important to you, the priority topics of study, a number of questions whether you agree or disagree with a certain type of development or certain type of building, building height, one for the east side, and one for the west side. Jirousek thinks that was a great suggestion because height is certainly one of the main topics of concern. At the end of the survey, there are three open-ended questions. What are model communities that you use as examples that we can learn from? What are the big ideas you might have for the waterfront? Then lastly, what are the most significant concerns that you have? He thinks it is a great opportunity for people to express the answers to the open-ended questions at the end just in case they didn't hit anything on their mind in the first several questions. He also would love to hear the commissioners' comments on the second draft survey. He is working on the visual preference survey that will be another online platform survey where they have 30-40 images, and it is very simple to choose which image you prefer and if they wanted to say why they could provide the answer to why they chose the specific image. So, they may like a certain building type, but it might be something they like in Grand Rapids or something they might like in another city. They want to be very clear that you do prefer this image as if this was situated on the east or west side of the river. So that is in the

works. Jirousek has been working on collecting a number of images for that survey. The third component of the public input process is going to be an open house or opportunities, and pop-ups at some local events. He said that one of the Planning Commission members mentioned a few different city events that they could have a table at just to get input or answer questions. They could also do an open house or a town hall similar to what they were discussing for short-term rentals. With that, he suggests that they have half of that be an open house with stations, and the other half be a public presentation, then possibly a question and answer in the end. It would be important to host that after they have the survey results in and after they have the assessment in their hands. They could give an update on the surveys and of the assessment during the formal presentation at the open house or town hall meeting. There is a lot to take in tonight. He would prefer that they at least get through the survey and get that posted in the next week or so and thinks it would be best if they had that open for three to four weeks. That would put them in mid-July. At the same time, they could get the visual preference out and follow a similar timeframe, then the big question is just when the open house would be. He thinks they are in the kind of the same position as the short-term rental taskforce and to where they have a lot of this work that they still need to complete before they open it up to that public opportunity. They certainly could do fewer formal pop-ups at events but if they have a formal open house, that would be a late July timeframe or even early August.

Jirousek said that this will be an online platform, that it is the best way to collect data. He said that they should have paper copies at City Hall so if someone wanted to stop in and fill out the survey, they could do so. They do realize that not everyone has online access. The downside of paper copies is the data entry process, but he doesn't expect that they would have more than 5% of the results as paper copies as most would probably fill the survey out online.

Commission members questioned how they would prevent duplicates. Jirousek said that they have an option on Survey Monkey to restrict only one response per IP address or you could allow for multiple responses. It is somewhat hard to restrict to one response per IP address because that only allows one response per household and family members or roommates may have different opinions. He explains that sometimes they have to just take it as input. He doesn't think that anyone is going to try to stack the deck but if they download the data and can see that they have 15 responses from one IP address, they can flag that as potential foul play.

Jirousek said that they could have both surveys available at upcoming local events and keep the surveys open until the end of July so that they are getting the word out at these events and letting the public know that the survey is available in paper form as well as online. He said that he could get materials ready in the two or three weeks so he can shoot to make sure that they make deadlines for all of the events on the July schedule. Jirousek said that this meeting was very helpful, that it gave him directions to prepare both surveys, the table boards, and then the assessment report. He is shooting to have everything done in the next three weeks so that they have enough time to review that ahead of the July 20th Planning Commission meeting. The assessment report that was in the April 30 scope memo included the report in which we are going to look at what the current zoning allows and look at best practices from other

communities. They will look at the current zoning and see if it's going to result in something consistent with their vision.

Jirousek said that this isn't the first assessment for this upcoming meeting next month. The areas of study would be Character Assessment, a Development and Redevelopment Assessment, Master Plan and Zoning Assessment, and Best Practices Review. At that time, the report will not have the final recommendations about how we move forward. He believes the recommendations would come in August, after they have the chance to review this report and after they have the benefit of public input. Then they would have more concrete zoning recommendations like what was referenced about consolidating zoning districts or gradient overlay and so on. That will be assessed over the next couple of weeks and will be based on public input.

The assessment report for next month will compare the different zoning districts. One of the Planning Commission members asked them to provide a side-by-side table concerning the uses and dimensional requirements for the zoning districts involved in the area of focus. He thinks it is a great idea and it should be part of the assessment. Jirousek was just giving examples of how you could amend the zoning ordinance, which they don't know what they are going to do yet but will have the recommendations in August.

He really appreciates the input and said that this gives him good direction to prepare the surveys and the materials for July. As Ryan suggested, he thinks that once they have that all finalized, they will go through July and schedule something in August with the results for the work from July.

7. Communications: None.

8. Reports of Officers and Committees:

A. Zoning Administrator Activity Report: Director of Planning, Zoning, and Project Management Cummins gave brief update on his report.

9. Public Comments: None.

10. Commission Comments:

- **Commissioner Gardner:** Several of their commission member's terms are coming up July 1st. Commissioners Broeker and Chair Mann's terms are coming up and as he understands both have resubmitted an application. He thanked them both and is very pleased by that.
- **Commissioner Anderson:** Gave kudos to the City Clerk regarding terms that are coming up and keeping everyone informed.
- **Commissioner LaChey:** He said that the commission spent a lot of time knocking around how to get public input on the waterfront. He thinks that people who live in town care a lot more about the short-term rental issue than whether there are three, four, or no story buildings along the waterfront and that may be an educational thing that they need to learn about the waterfront. He hopes that the same type of effort for public input is put towards how people feel about short-

term rentals in this town, they just talked about an exhaustive way to drag information and opinions out of people whether they are walking past City Hall or are sitting listening to a concert. It is just an observation, but he hopes moving forward that there is similar effort put towards gaining public input for the short-term rentals as seemingly they're going to be doing for how people feel about the development or lack of development or the waterfront.

- Commissioner Gaunt: She thinks that when these questions go out and people are forced to think about what could happen on the waterfront in terms of development, that will generate some interest. She said that if there was one message that came through loud and clear from everyone is about getting public input on short-term rentals, everyone's input.
- Chairman Manns: He thinks that the public engagement is something somewhat different between the short-term rental and the waterfront which is much more visual. What do you want to see in a short-term rental? Many times, we'll have someone say that they don't think we should have short-term rentals, or I don't think you need to make any changes. He says that they haven't really had a chance to think through or understand all of the ramifications of either decision. It is really more of an education and trying to help them move along. Manns thinks that is what they are trying to do with the surveys, gather that but then also put it out in the forums. He had an opportunity to meet the new person who is the Zoning Administrator for the City of the Village of Douglas. They are watching a lot of the things that the City of Saugatuck is doing very closely, and their residents are also watching and asking if Saugatuck changes their rules if the City of the Village of Douglas will follow as it is an issue there as well. That had to do with the waterfront as well as short-term rentals as far as what he was saying. Some of the new developments they are talking about are geared toward second home investment, and short-term rental ownership.

Motion by Anderson, second by Gaunt, to approve adjournment of the meeting. Upon voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Chair Manns adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Williams, City Deputy Clerk & DPW Administrative Assistant